1. **How does your lesson involve the following?**

Asking Historical Questions  
Students are instructed to first analyze oral histories through primary sources. As a group, they select three primary sources to read and analyze then they must generate three research questions based on their sources.

Collecting Historical Information  
After the initial activity, students must then choose a social history project they wish to pursue in order to conduct an “interview” based on their topic. Their research and interview will help to answer the previous questions that were generated from primary sources.

Drawing Conclusions and Reflecting on Learning   
At the end of the lesson, students must write a brief essay on what they learned through the activities. Possible essays may answer questions such as:

* What was the most significant change in the lives of everyday Americans identified by your research?
* What evidence did you find of this change?
* What other sources might you consult to confirm the significance of this change?
* Why do you think oral history is a useful tool for understanding the past?
* What are oral history's strengths? What are its limitations?

These essays help students to reflect on their learning by relating it to the purposes of oral history and its impact on social history.

English Language Learners and History

Something I considered while reading this lesson were the challenges for ELL students. This lesson, especially the interviews may be an interesting outlet for these students and could show how historical events, even in a country that they may be new to, has affected them. By interviewing people in their own community, these students can identify the impacts of history perhaps in their own cultures and families.

1. **Additionally address each of the following to complete this assignment:**
2. **Describe how the relevant characteristics of disciplined inquiry are used in this lesson. Attempt to address each of the disciplined inquiry characteristics as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 of the *Doing History* textbook.**

* **History involves multiple activities and purposes**:
  + This activity indeed involves multiple activities. Students reflect on what they already know about history and the kinds of topics social historians’ research. Then they review features of oral histories and their purpose and impact on historical research. Students must then analyze primary sources in order to generate research topics dealing with oral history. The culmination of this lesson results in an interview in which students relate the present to the past by interviewing a member of their community in terms of social history. The students will present their projects to the class once complete. The overall purposes of this lesson is to enlighten students of the impact of social history and the usefulness of oral histories.
* **History helps us picture possible futures**:
  + A question generated from this lesson asks students to imagine the impacts of certain events or time periods on a variety of people. It could be said this lesson shows students how events have different outcomes and effects on different people, thus the possible futures for each vary. Through this lesson students identify these various futures by interviewing individuals who have experienced certain events.
* **History is about significant themes and questions**:
  + Due to the variety of people interviewed, the significant themes and questions present in this lesson could include:
    - The development of human societies and cultures
    - Movement and interaction of people, cultures, and ideas
    - Human interaction with the environment
    - Patterns of economic and technological organization and change
    - The relationships among values, beliefs, ideas, and institutions
* **History is interpretive**:
  + Because the students will be performing an interview, this lesson most definitely shows students that history is interpretive. Meaning that each person interviewed might explain or understand an event or occurrence differently than another person. Students could end up with a wide variety of effects generated from the same incident because interpretation is so widely divergent.
* **History is explained through narratives**:
  + This lesson highlights the narratives that help explain history. The interviews they will be doing is proof of this as the interview itself constitutes a historical narrative based on the life of the person the students speaks to.
* **History is more than politics**:
  + In their projects, students can choose who they interview. While some may choose a local politician such as the mayor, others may go to other sources such as a resident of a senior center. In this, the students won’t always find political interpretations in their interviews but maybe more personal ones.
* **History is controversial**:
  + Interviews pose a tricky situation that goes back to historical interpretations. Since these vary widely, students may encounter conflicting accounts on the same incidents. Through this, students will learn the controversy that is often present in researching social history.
* **Teaching and learning must have purpose**:
  + The purpose of this lesson is to help students recognize social changes and define social history by analyzing, interpreting, and conducting research through oral history. Students will use the information gathered through oral histories to explain social history.
* **Learning means in-depth understanding**:
  + In this lesson, students go beyond basic instruction and must immerse themselves in the histories of others. Rather than see a photograph or document, students have to investigate the impacts they had on individuals. Rather than read about events, students must determine the lasting effects on the people who experienced them.
* **Instruction must be built on student’s prior knowledge**:
  + In the first activity, the students are asked what they think of when they hear the word “history”. They then write down topics associated with it. They are then asked about the ways historians look at different topics within history and are shown that history is not always government activities or famous people, but that family and clothing also plays a role. In this, students could be asked to reflect on their own histories and how events have influenced their own lives.
* **Teaching means scaffolding**:
  + During the activity, the teacher does not simply lecture. He/she guides students to think about primary sources and the questions they may have generated from them. He/she gives the students the materials and tells them what to keep in mind as they research. Scaffolding refers to “a variety of instructional techniques used to move students progressively toward stronger understanding and, ultimately, greater independence in the learning” which is precisely what this activity does. The teacher involves students in class discussions, shows videos, plays audio recordings, presents primary sources, and models activities. The teacher also engages students during their research to check progress, provide insight, and challenge students.

1. **Determine the initiation, modeling, guided and independent practices that are used in this lesson. If the lesson doesn’t address these, then devise these for this lesson based on what is missing.**

* Initiation:
* *Ask students to write down topics they think of when they hear the word "history."*
* *Poll the class to see how many students wrote down topics such as presidents, wars, explorers, government activities, famous people, or famous inventions. Find out how many students suggested topics such as family life, recreation, work, clothing, and school.*
* *Point out that different kinds of historians look at different topics within history. While many history textbooks deal with political and military history, historians also study the lives and activities of everyday people. Everyday lives and activities are the subject matter of social history, which students will explore in this lesson.*
* Modeling:
* *The teacher may give examples of questions social historians might research.*
* Though not provided in the lesson plan, the teacher may show students what sorts of questions they ask after seeing a particular primary source as well as the individual they might interview in order to answer these questions.
* In addition, the teacher can show an example (either student or teacher created exemplar) of the interview and its presentation.
* Guided Practice:
* ***Analyzing Oral Histories***
  + *Assign each group three primary sources to read and analyze. As they finish their analysis, remind groups to generate three research questions related to the primary sources they have reviewed.*
  + *Conclude this section by compiling a class list of the research questions student groups have identified for further study*
* ***Background Research for Oral History Interviews***
  + *Post the class list of research questions on the chalkboard. Let student groups meet for about 10 minutes to review the social history topic they wish to pursue. You may wish to approve the research topics before groups proceed with their background research.*
  + *Remind students that, after their background research, they will conduct oral history interviews of their own to gather information on their research topic.*
  + *Students are asked to find just two or three documents relevant to their research topic.*
* *Review and approve the list of ten interview questions each group will generate. Role play an interview for the class using questions from one of the groups.*
* *You will want to review interview manners with students before they meet with interview subjects.*
* Independent Practice**:**
* **Oral History Interviews**
  + *Students should be accompanied by an adult for face-to-face interviews. (Interview subjects sometimes talk above a young interviewer's head to an adult. Adults may want to sit to the side to keep the focus on the student interviewer. Students can go in pairs. One student can take notes, and the other can ask questions. Taking notes is helpful if the interviewer asks questions not on the original list.*
  + *Students will be expected to report on both their interview results and how those results influence their answers to the research questions they posed.*

1. **Describe at least two assessment(s) in this lesson and then discuss at least two additional assessments that could be used with this lesson.**

* 2 assessments found in the lesson:
  + Brief essay on one of the following topics:
    - What was the most significant change in the lives of everyday Americans identified by your research? What evidence did you find of this change? What other sources might you consult to confirm the significance of this change?
    - Why do you think oral history is a useful tool for understanding the past? What are oral history's strengths? What are its limitations?
  + Students can work in their groups to create museum displays on their social history topics. Displays should:
    - illustrate significant changes in the lives of everyday Americans identified by the group's research;
    - Provide evidence in support of those changes (such as excerpts from class interviews and the American Life Histories collection, artifacts, and information from other sources).
* 2 other potential assessments:
  + Teacher can have students turn in their interview questions prior to the interviews as well as the answers given by the interviewee.
  + Teacher can use observation and prompts while students are researching and working on their assignments as an informal assessment.

1. **Identify/discuss at least three differentiated instruction (DI) modifications you could make to this lesson(s) to accommodate diverse learners. See Chapter 6 in the *Understanding by Design* textbook for numerous strategies to differentiate the content, process or product of a lesson.**

* Three DI modifications:
  + If certain students need more time, teacher can negotiate delay of due dates for students who may work hard but have difficulty working quickly.
  + Some students do not work well in groups- these students could be given the option to work individually, perhaps in a quiet location to increase focus.
  + One modification the lesson actually allows is to let students interview in pairs in which one student writes the answers as the other asks. For students who not be good at communication or writing, or who would perform better with a supporting partner, this could be quite helpful.
* Extensions:
  + Encourage students to search the American Memory collection, [Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Color Photographs](http://www.loc.gov/collections/fsa-owi-color-photographs/about-this-collection/), for visual sources related to automobiles, dancing, women's work, or topics they pursued in their own oral histories. The following questions may help students select and analyze the photographs:
    - Do the photographs support the results of your oral history interviews and background research? If so, how?
    - Do the photographs refute the social history conclusions you made in this lesson? If so, how?
    - Do the photographs provide evidence of changes over time? Why or why not?
  + Students can host an open house for their interviewees during which they present their displays.

# Lesson plan used: Oral History and Social History <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/using-history/index.html>

## **Lesson Overview**

This lesson presents social history content and topics through the voices of ordinary people. It draws on primary sources from the collection, [American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940](http://www.loc.gov/collection/federal-writers-project/about-this-collection/).

Using excerpts from the collection, students study social history topics through interviews that recount the lives of ordinary Americans. Based on these excerpts and further research in the collections, students develop their own research questions. They then plan and conduct oral history interviews with members of their communities.

## **Objectives**

Students will be able to:

* Define social history and formulate questions about social history topics.
* Analyze, interpret, and conduct research using oral histories.
* Use oral history interview techniques to gather information about social history.
* Interpret recent changes social life in the United States using existing oral histories and by conducting original oral history interviews.

## **Standards**

**Top of Form**

**Bottom of Form**

## **Time Required**

* One to weeks

## **Recommended Grade Level**

* 9-12
* 6-8

## **Topic**

* Oral Histories
* City & Regional History

## **Era**

* Great Depression and WWII, 1929-1945

## **Lesson Preparation**

If computer time or printer access is limited, you may wish to print out these primary sources in advance:

* [American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940](http://www.loc.gov/collection/federal-writers-project/about-this-collection/)
* [WPA Life Histories: About the Federal Writers' Project](http://www.loc.gov/collection/federal-writers-project/about-this-collection/); and
* Working Women in the 1930s
  + [I Ain't No Midwife](http://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh000507)
  + [Packinghouse workers](http://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh000048)
  + [Italian Feed](http://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh002744)
  + [Miss Henrietta C. Dozier](http://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh000450)
* Dancing as a Form of Recreation, 1890s to 1930s
  + [Charles Cole](http://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh000915)
  + [Mrs. Charley Huyck](http://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh000999)
  + [Old Time Dance Calls](http://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh001953)
* Americans and the Automobile
  + [Roy A. Morse](http://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh001043)
  + [Yankee Innkeeper](http://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh000752)
  + [Dunnell #13](http://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh000741)
  + [Transportation](http://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh000191)

## **Lesson Procedure**

## I. Introduction to Social History

1. Ask students to write down topics they think of when they hear the word "history."
2. Poll the class to see how many students wrote down topics such as presidents, wars, explorers, government activities, famous people, or famous inventions. Find out how many students suggested topics such as family life, recreation, work, clothing, and school.
3. Point out that different kinds of historians look at different topics within history. While many history textbooks deal with political and military history, historians also study the lives and activities of everyday people. Everyday lives and activities are the subject matter of social history, which students will explore in this lesson. Here are examples of questions social historians might research:
   * What kind of food does this family usually eat? How do they get their food?
   * What kinds of natural resources are available where this family lives? How do these resources influence the types of food, shelter, and clothing available?
   * Does every child in the family attend school? Why or why not?
   * Can every member of the family read and write? Why or why not? What kinds of books are available to the family?
   * How important is religion to the family's life?
   * What work does each member of the family do?
   * Does the family own property? Why or why not?
   * Which family members can vote? Which family members do vote?
   * What transportation does the family use to get around?
   * What games do children play? What do adults do for relaxation?
   * What family activities might be considered an art or craft today?

[Top](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/using-history/procedure.html#skip_menu)

### II. Oral History and the Federal Writers' Project

In preparation review (or have your students review) the special presentation [American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940.](http://www.loc.gov/collection/federal-writers-project/about-this-collection/)

American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940 contains audio recordings of actors reading from oral history interviews.

See [How to View](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amviewer.html) for information about using these recordings.

### III. Analyzing Oral Histories

1. Students analyze the oral histories, recording their thoughts on the [Primary Source Analysis Tool](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html). Before the students begin, select questions from the teacher's guide [Analyzing Oral Histories](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html) to focus and prompt analysis and discussion. If computer time is limited, you may wish to print out, duplicate, and distribute copies of the primary sources for each group:

A: Working Women in the 1930s

* [I Ain't No Midwife](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/using-history/midwife.html)
* [Packinghouse Workers](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/using-history/workers.html)
* [Italian Feed](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/using-history/italian.html)
* [Miss Henrietta C. Dozier](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/using-history/dozier.html)

B: Dancing as a Form of Recreation, 1890s-1930s

* [Charles Cole](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/using-history/cole.html)
* [Mrs. Charley Huyck](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/using-history/charley.html)
* [Old Time Dance Calls](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/using-history/dance.html)

C: Americans and the Automobile

* [Roy A. Morse](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/using-history/morse.html)
* [Yankee Innkeeper](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/using-history/rgould.html)
* [Dunnell #13](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/using-history/dunnell.html)
* [Transportation](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/using-history/botsford.html)

1. Assign each group three primary sources to read and analyze. Allow about 30 minutes for reading and analysis. Groups that finish early can read additional excerpts.
2. As they finish their analysis, remind groups to generate three research questions related to the primary sources they have reviewed.
   * Each group will choose a social history topic as the focus for their upcoming oral history interviews. Groups may choose to pursue additional questions about dancing, cars, or women's work from this section of the lesson, or they can choose another topic to research. Alternatively, the class may choose to research one topic, with small groups each choosing a different aspect of the topic.
3. If necessary, assign as homework the generation of research topic ideas by each student.
4. Conclude this section by compiling a class list of the research questions student groups have identified for further study.

### IV. Background Research for Oral History Interviews

1. To begin this section, post the class list of research questions on the chalkboard. Let student groups meet for about 10 minutes to review the social history topic they wish to pursue. You may wish to approve the research topics before groups proceed with their background research.
2. Remind students that, after their background research, they will conduct oral history interviews of their own to gather information on their research topic.
3. While the [American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940](http://www.loc.gov/collection/federal-writers-project/about-this-collection/) collection is rich in information on a wide range of social history topics, the online search process can frustrate students. Searches often turn up as many irrelevant as relevant documents. Help students use detailed search words to narrow their results.
4. Students are asked to find just two or three documents relevant to their research topic. They should be able to accomplish this task in one class period.

### V. Guidelines for Oral History Interviews

1. You may need to identify interview subjects for your students. Some ideas for identifying interview subjects include:
   * Recruit community residents to come to your classroom.
   * Arrange a field trip to a local senior center for a student interview day.
   * Prepare a list of names and telephone numbers of community residents willing to be interviewed.

Begin this section by explaining the method you have selected for identifying interview subjects for oral history interviews. Establish the due date for completion of interviews and for class presentations on research results. Tell students that they will be expected to report on both their interview results and how those results influence their answers to the research questions they posed.

1. Students should be accompanied by an adult for face-to-face interviews. (Interview subjects sometimes talk above a young interviewer's head to an adult. Adults may want to sit to the side to keep the focus on the student interviewer. Students can go in pairs. One student can take notes, and the other can ask questions. Taking notes is helpful if the interviewer asks questions not on the original list.
2. Before interviews begin, you may wish to review and approve the list of ten interview questions each group will generate. Role play an interview for the class using questions from one of the groups.
3. You will want to review interview manners with students before they meet with interview subjects.
4. More advanced students may be interested in the story of [Charles Todd](http://www.loc.gov/collections/todd-and-sonkin-migrant-workers-from-1940-to-1941/articles-and-essays/charles-lafayette-lafe-todd/), a graduate student who decided to do field research for the Library of Congress to earn money for his summer vacation in California. The results of his work have become [Voices from the Dust Bowl: The Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin Migrant Worker Collection, 1940-1941](http://www.loc.gov/collections/todd-and-sonkin-migrant-workers-from-1940-to-1941/about-this-collection/).
5. On the due date for group presentations, allow time for each group to describe their interview and research results. Then conduct a general class discussion to summarize the experience of the interviews and what students learned about their social history research topics. The following questions may be useful:
   * What was the most surprising piece of information your interviews generated? Why was it surprising?
   * What types of interview questions led to relevant, interesting answers? What types of interview questions were less effective?
   * Was it hard to keep interview subjects on the topic? What strategies worked to pull the person back to the focus of the interview?
   * What good follow-up questions did you ask?
   * What might have made the interview more productive?
   * Did you question the accuracy of the information the interview subject provided? Why?
   * What other sources might you check to see if the interview subject provided accurate information?
   * Based on your interviews and those you read in the American Life Histories collection, what changes have occurred in the lives of everyday Americans over the last 100 years? How significant do you think these changes are?
   * Do your oral history interviews or Federal Writers' Project interviews show areas of everyday life that have changed little over the last 100 years? Why do you think this is true?
   * Through the interviews, what information did you gather about causes of change in everyday life? For example, were changes in work related to changes in technology? to society's ideas about the role of women?

## **Lesson Evaluation/ Assessment**

1. Ask each student to write a brief essay on one of the following topics:
   * What was the most significant change in the lives of everyday Americans identified by your research? What evidence did you find of this change? What other sources might you consult to confirm the significance of this change?
   * Why do you think oral history is a useful tool for understanding the past? What are oral history's strengths? What are its limitations?
2. Students can work in their groups to create museum displays on their social history topics. Displays should:
   * Illustrate significant changes in the lives of everyday Americans identified by the group's research;
   * Provide evidence in support of those changes (such as excerpts from class interviews and the American Life Histories collection, artifacts, and information from other sources).

### **Extension**

1. Encourage students to search the American Memory collection, [Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Color Photographs](http://www.loc.gov/collections/fsa-owi-color-photographs/about-this-collection/), for visual sources related to automobiles, dancing, women's work, or topics they pursued in their own oral histories. The following questions may help students select and analyze the photographs:
   * Do the photographs support the results of your oral history interviews and background research? If so, how?
   * Do the photographs refute the social history conclusions you made in this lesson? If so, how?
   * Do the photographs provide evidence of changes over time? Why or why not?
2. Students can host an open house for their interviewees during which they present their displays.